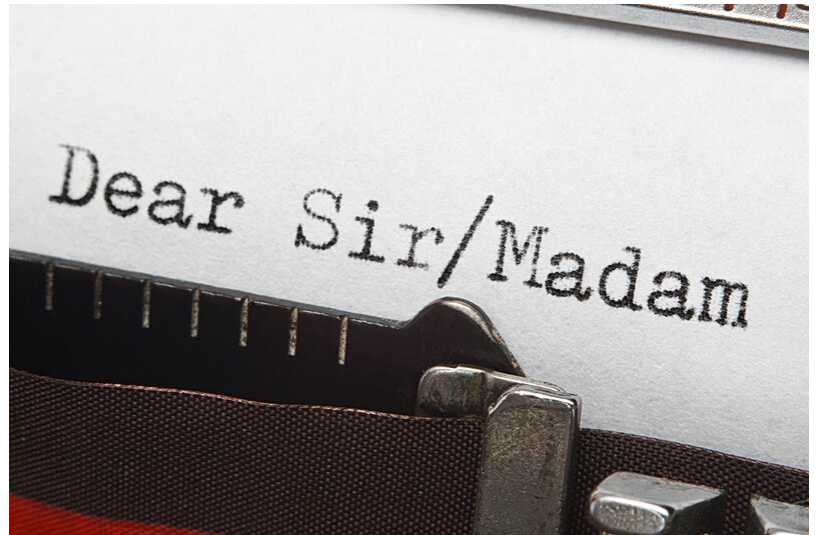


# Word for Word

## Formally or Formerly?

*Formally* and *formerly* have completely different meanings, but the spellings and pronunciations of these two adverbs are so similar that one is often used when the other is meant.

*Formally* is most commonly used to describe acting in a prescribed or customary form, with formality, or ceremoniously.<sup>1</sup>



### Examples:

Lily was excited to receive a letter formally confirming her appointment to assistant professor.

Plans for the new research facility were formally unveiled in a ceremony attended by faculty and community leaders.

In contrast, *formerly* refers to being in the past or to events that occurred previously.<sup>2</sup>

### Examples:

Dr. Harris was formerly affiliated with the Mayo Clinic but recently joined the faculty at Johns Hopkins University.

The study analyzed resting metabolic rates in formerly obese men and women.

### References

1. Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language (unabridged). Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam Company; 1976:893.
2. Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language

(unabridged). Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam Company; 1976:894.

--Dawn Chalaire

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